MAKERS OF INDIAN LITERATURE

DINAKRUSHNA DAS

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Contents

1

Introduction

It is often the lot of a poet, in the annals of literature, to be denigrated, despised and excommunicated from the elite society of his times, and to be adored after his death, his much-condemned work hailed as a literary masterpiece. Such has been the lot of the Oriya poet, Dīnakrushna Dās too.

In the latter part of his life the poet was exiled from Puri, the seat of Lord Jagannāth, the land he loved and adored, and he died in the desolation of a lonely cottage in the outskirts of the temple town, gazing longingly at the towering spire of the temple of the Lord. In many a stanza in *Rasakallola*, his magnum opus, the poet has given vent to his anguish and frustration. In the 21st Canto of *Rasakallola*, he cries:

Oh Lord! Thou hast dashed all my hopes and dreams,
The tree of compassion,
Has borne bitter fruits of despondency and misfortune...
This does not befit thee,
Oh Master! to treat thus Thy own servitor,
As the Lord Thou hast been unfair,
Thou should not have discarded,
The services of Thy devoted.

In *Rasakallola* as well as in other compositions like *Artātraṇa Chautīsa*, the poet pours out his sorrow and despair with almost God-like serenity and resignation.

The late Professor Artaballabh Mohanty, an esteemed critic and scholar of mediaeval Oriya literature has compared Dīnakrushna to Dante, who created the Divine Comedy in exile. The comparison may be tenuous. But, like Dante, Dīnakrushna too, was uncompromising in temperament and pronounced harsh judgements on the perversities of his contemporaries and poured out vehement denouncements of them. There is no gainsaying the fact that Dīnakrushna was a genuine poet, who was never lured by fame, nor toiled for mammon. Jagannāth's sacred name was his only consolation.

Like the sculptors of the Orissan temples, the Oriya poets of the early and the mediaeval period too, have left little personal records. So much so that the lives of Sarala Dās, Balarām Dās and Jagannāth Dās, the founding triumvirate of Oriya literature, who belonged to the 15th and 16th centuries, are matters of conjecture and speculation. Even the floruit of many distinguished poets of the early nineteenth century is still the subject matter of controversy. The life of Upéndra Bhanja, the most prolific among the ornate poets of the mediaeval Oriya literature, though hailed as the unrivalled king of poets, also belongs largely to the realm of legend, and the years of his birth and death are yet undetermined. Had there been no accidental mention of his life and works, his floruit would have remained in darkness. Dīnakrushna Dās of *Rasakallola* was no exception to this tradition.

Whether Dīnakrushna Dās was one, or whether there were two poets bearing the same name is still an unresolved problem. It would be relevant here to dwell on that question while discussing the life of Dīnakrushna, the creator of *Rasakallola*.

Scholars like Tarinicharan Rath, Shyāma Sundar Rājguru, B.C. Mazumdar and Pandit Bināyak Misra are of the view that the Dīnakrushna of *Rasakallola* was different from the Dīnakrushna of *Rasa Vinōda* and other similar works of verse while Professor Artaballabh Mohanty and Pandit Sūrya Narāyan Dās are of the opinion that the two Dīnakrushnas were one and the same. But a critical analysis of the poetic motif, themes and style of the two poets, establishes beyond doubt that the two Dīnakrushnas were two different persons.

The Dīnakrushna of *Rasa Vinōda* was a mere versifier. His versification was a mechanical, pedantic exercise in the combination of words. Rightly, therefore, B.C. Mazumdar observes:

> Any superficial reader may notice that the *Rasa Vinōda* is a work of very inferior merit and the author of the *Rasakallola* cannot be connected in any way with *Rasa Vinōda*.

On the other hand *Rasakallola* is a spontaneous flow of poetry. *Kallōla Padalālityam*, (poetic grace as that of the 'Kallola' or synomising poetic grace with the 'Rasakallola,' is a byword in Oriya literary parlance). *Rasakallola* was written in the ornate kāvya genre with poetic conceits, while the *Rasa Vinōda* and other similar works were written in the simple, unsophisticated style of the Purānas. The Dīnakrushna of *Rasa Vinōda* records the technique of his versification in the following words:

> The lines of this couplet have nine letters,
> Nowhere it can be eight, ten is out of question;
> Count the letters on your finger tips,
> And inscribe them on the leaves.

From this, it is evident that this Dīnakrushna was a mere versifier.

But the Dīnakrushna of the *Rasakallola* was a genuine poet, whose verse was an uninterrupted, free flow of aesthetic exuberance.

Dinakrushna, the poet of *Rasakallola* spent his days in great poverty. According to *Dādhatyā Bhakti* (the Chronicle of the Devout Saints) composed in the 18th Century A.D. by Rāma Dās, the poet lived on public charity like a true Vaishnava. But a life-time of unrelenting penury and hardship made the poet write the following in *Rasakallola* which has an autobiographical touch. In the 26th stanza of the 16th Canto of *Rasakallola* one gets a glimpse into the agonies of the poet.

Oh Lord! why Thou hast made me born in the muck
of this world,
Why not a bee hovering around Thy lotus feet?
And I could have danced and danced in ecstasy.
For filling the belly, I have assumed many roles,
Sometimes a flying crow,
Sometimes the disciple of a fool or an idiot,
Sometimes a puppet-dancer,
Sometimes a deaf sycophant,
Yet at other times a monkey, gnawing at the
Kernels of green cocoanuts.

These utterances give an idea of the destitution and misery in which the poet had to spend his days.

But Dīnakrushna, the author of *Rasa Vinōda* was born and lived under more propitious circumstances. He has recorded his biographical details in the last chapter of the *Rasa Vinōda*, from which it is evident that he was born in Jaleswar, on the banks of the Subarnarekha, in the north of Orissa, in a Rajput family proud of their caste. He further records that after the completion of the *Rasa Vinōda* he migrated to Puri, which was then not only the seat of the ruling Bhoi dynasty, but a cultural centre. According to Tarinicharan Rath, Dīnakrushna lived for sometime in Bhimanagar, in the close vicinity of Khurda, not far away

from Puri, enjoying the patronage of Balarām Samanta Sinhara, a feudal chief.

From this internal evidence of the *Rasa Vinōda*, it can probably be made out that the Dīnakrushna of *Rasa Vinōda* was a contemporary of Bālabhadra Dév, a king of the Bhoi dynasty, who reigned from A.D. 1656 to 1664, whereas, according to the *Dādhatyā Bhakti* of Rāma Dās, Dīnakrushna of *Rasakallola* lived in Puri during the regime of Dibyasingha Dév, who ruled Orissa from A.D. 1692 to 1715. Considering the historical context as also the literary merit of the two Dīnakrushnas, we are inclined to conclude that the Dīnakrushna of *Rasakallola* and his namesake, the poet of the *Rasa Vinōda* and other works, were two different persons. While the Dīnakrushna of *Rasakallola* belonged to the school of rāgānuga bhakti or the emotive devotional cult of Vaiṣṇavism, preached by Sri Chaitanya, the Dīnakrushna of the *Rasa Vinōda* was a commentator of mediaeval Orissa Vaiṣṇavism, based on devotion with knowledge (*gyānamiṣra bhakti*) with its emphasis on *pinḍa-brahmānḍa-baḍ yoga* (the concept of body as universe) and other esoteric practices.

Besides *Rasa Vinōda*, Dīnakrushna composed a number of other works of minor merit which include: *Guṇa Sāgar*, *Bhāba Samudra*, *Bhūta Kéli*, *Kansa Bōdhanā*, *Amruta Sāgara*, *Gīta Gōvinda Artha*, *Mukti Sāgar*, *Prastāba Sindhu*, *Tatwa Sāgar*, *Jagmohan Chhanda*, *Jambāvati Bibha*, *Gyāna Sāgara*, *Dharma Sāgara*, *Pancha Patavansi Bibha*, *Nāmāratna Geeta*, *Narakāsura Badha*, *Bhakti Sāgar*, *Strī Puruṣa Lakshana*, *Mahima Sāgara* and *Sarīra Bhéda Bhajan*. But the Dīnakrushna of *Rasakallola* was a much less prolific poet, and besides *Nava Kéli* and *Artātraṇa Chautīsa*, no other composition of his has come to the notice of scholars as yet. Probably a life tortured by grinding poverty, disease and general apathy sapped the creative urges of the poet. In the following pages, we intend to discuss the life and works of Dīnakrushna, the poet of *Rasakallola* whose fame time has not yet diminished and who has by his poetic merit carved a niche for himself in the halls of fame.

2

Historical Background

Dinakrushna was born in an age of political chaos and spiritual discord. Politically Orissa had entered a dark period, after losing its independence in A.D. 1558 and had now become a province of the far flung Moghul Empire. Though the Moghuls had conquered Orissa in A.D. 1558, Moghul power could not be properly stabilised and the province was plunged into political chaos.

According to Sterling, after the fall of Mukund Dév, the last independent Oriya king, and his two titular successors, anarchy prevailed for a period of 21 years, during which the Afghan-Mohammedans occupied the whole of coastal Orissa and there was no king. At the end of this period, the ministers and the

feudal chiefs, beginning to recover from depression, assembled together and chose Ramani Rautray as their chief, whom they raised to the rank and dignity of Maharajah of Orissa, in A.D. 1580, under the title of Rāma Chandra Dév. With him began the Bhoi dynasty, which ruled Orissa till A.D. 1753 when the Marhattas took possession of the province. The choice of Rāma Chandra Dév as the Maharajah of Orissa, was confirmed by Sewāi Jai Singh, the general of Emperor Akbar, who visited Orissa, about that time, with his army, to look after imperial interests. The sight of its numerous temples and the sacred feel of everything in Utkal Desa are said to have impressed him with feelings of so much reverence and admiration that he decided to interfere very little in its affairs and retired soon after leaving a large share of authority in the hands of its native princes. According to W.W. Hunter, Sawāi Jai Singh was said to have exclaimed, "This country is not a subject for conquest or for schemes of human ambition. It belongs to the Gods, and from one end to the other it is one region of pilgrimage." This arrangement received final approval when Rāja Mān Singh visited Orissa in A.D. 1592, and recognised Rāma Chandra Dév as the Maharajah, free of all tributes, and conferred upon him the commandership of three thousand five hundred horsemen.*

But the religious eclecticism of Akbar soon gave way to the religious bigotry of Aurangzeb, who in his proselytising frenzy had sent his army to desecrate the temples of Orissa and force the king of Orissa to submit to Moghul authority. The temple of Lord Jagannāth at Puri particularly, became the target of these series of vandalistic attacks. A number of temples were either desecrated or destroyed. During the reign of Dibyasingha Dév (A.D. 1690 to 1731), seventh in the order of the Bhoi dynasty kings, Ekrām Khān, the military commander of Aurangzeb, invaded Orissa with the sole purpose of desecrating Lord Jagannāth. During his siege of the temple, the attendants removed the idols of Bālabhadra and Subhadra to Kōkōl, an island on the Chilika lake, while Lord Jagannāth was kept hidden behind

*Sterling. As. Res. XV. 167. 291.

Bimala Devi, inside the temple, and a fake idol of the Lord was kept in front of the sanctum sanctorum. The Moghul vandals called off the siege after "capturing" this fake idol; which was offered to Jamāl Khān, brother of Ekrām. He carried away this idol to Cuttack in victorious glee, while the Lord was being worshipped inside the temple. At last Dibyasingha Dév sued for peace, after paying the Naib-Nazim, a sum of Rs 30,000. Thereafter an uninterrupted period of peace ensued in the tortured land of Orissa.

Dibyasingha Dév was a great patron of literature and learning. Many poets who composed kāvyas enjoyed his royal patronage. Bhūpati Pandit, Lōkanath Bidyādhar, Bhaktacharan, Dīnakrushna and Upéndra Bhanj, were the most important among them. It was indeed a golden age in the history of mediaeval Oriya literature.

But behind their literary flowering were starker realities. If Orissa was politically subjugated, spiritually it was also in a chaos. The last eighteen years of Shri Chaitanya (A.D. 1515 to 1533) were spent in 'Neelachala' or Puri in Orissa. It remains an unsolved mystery in the life of Shri Chaitanya and his movement as to why he left Gauda or Bengal to the care of Nityananda and chose for himself Orissa as his field of activities. That Gauda was then under Muslim occupation would not be a convincing argument, in as much as Chaitanya, through a mass movement, had already acquired permission from Hussen Sāh, the ruler of Bengal, to preach his cult and lead Sankīrtana parties in the streets, unhindered by the Muslim authorities. The 'gherao' of Chand Kaji's residence in Navadwip under Chaitanya's leadership, for obtaining the sanction, is a well-known episode recorded in Chaitanya Charitāmruta by Krushna Dās Kavirāj Gōswāmī. Muslim rule in Bengal was no deterrent to him.

Secondly, if it is urged that Hindu Bengal was under the undisputed sway of the Smārtās or the conservative Brāhmins led by Raghunandan of the Navyanyāya School, which did not favour Chaitanya's movement, how did it come about that

Nityānanda, an associate of Shri Chaitanya, and obviously of lesser calibre and more unorthodox than Chaitanya, faced the challenge of the conservative Brāhmins?

However, that is not the subject of our present study. The fact to be noted is the long stay of Shri Chaitanya in Orissa, had deeply influenced the religious and spiritual life of Orissa which had its natural impact on Oriya literature.

3

Vaiṣṇavism in Orissa

Vaiṣṇavism was not unknown in Orissa before the advent of Shri Chaitanya. Though from inscriptive records it is apparent that even before the Ganga kings Viṣṇu worship was not unknown in Orissa, the visit of Rāmānuja, the last of the Ālwārs, sometime between A.D. 1122 and 1137 and Chodaganga Déva's conversion to the Vaiṣṇava faith, as enunciated by Rāmānuja, had laid the foundations of Vaiṣṇavism in Orissa on solid grounds. Hitherto, Lord Jagannāth and the Trinity were worshipped as Buddha or Buddhist manifestation of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

Since Vaiṣṇavism enjoyed royal patronage from the 12th century onwards, Lord Jagannāth began to be considered an

exclusively Vaiṣṇavite deity, and identified with Viṣṇu or Mahāviṣṇu, though at the same time He was the symbol of many a non-Vaiṣṇavite cult which by then had been driven underground. Sir Jadunāth Sarkār, the eminent historian, in his Foreward to *The History of Mediaeval Vaiṣṇavism in Orissa* (P. 7), rightly observes:

> Many Indian religions and even small cults have been driven out by the political pressure from the North and the South, to seek refuge in the sparsely inhabited but hospitable land of Orissa, tucked away in a corner of India, hard to traverse and off the beaten track of armies. Here during centuries of tolerated but stagnant life, they have shed their angularities and gradually come to be assimilated to a common type, finally gathering themselves under the shadow of Jagannāth and thus gaining mass sympathy in this new home.

Vaiṣṇavism, as prevalent in Orissa, before the advent of Sri Chaitanya, commonly known as 'Utkalīya Vaiṣṇavism', as distinct from the Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇavism, was a mosaic of faiths and cults. Mediaeval Orissan Vaiṣṇavism or Utkalīya Vaiṣṇavism had absorbed religious ideas and practices from Nāthism and Tāntric Buddhism, though it did not identify itself with either of them. According to Utkalīya Vaiṣṇavism, Viṣṇu or Mahāviṣṇu was no other than the Void (Sūnya) of esoteric Buddhist religious cults. In mediaeval Vaiṣṇavite Oriya literature, the Void was depicted as the formless Viṣṇu or *Nirākāra*. Yogamāya is the *Ādi-Ṣakti* or primoridal energy. In mediaeval Vaiṣṇavite Oriya literature, she is described as *Ardhamātra*, immanent in the Void. Yogamāya was the substitute for the *Māyā-Ṣakti* of the Tantras, and who is the material cause of the Universe. She is the *Ādi-Ṣakti* or the Primordial Energy, the Goddess, and the personified Great Void is the God. Thus the first Mother and the *Nirākār Niranjana* were associates. The worship of the Void, the non-dual state of *Puruṣa* and *Prakruti*, was practised through complicated Yogic processes based on *Astānga Yōga*, *Sādhana* and *Yantra*. Achyutānanda, the eldest among the five preceptors (*Pancha Sakhā*) of the Utkalīya or Orissa School of Vaiṣṇavism describes

thus the mode of worship of the Void in *Sūnya Sanhitā* (Chronicle of the Void), Chapter-IX:

> I placed the thirty-two letters upon my heart and sitting straight up from the navel, became absorbed in meditation. Then with face turned upwards, I concentrated and meditated upon the *Nirākāra*. Having thus levitated myself, I soon realised the Void and lost myself in the contemplation of *Parama Hamsa.*

Prof. Prabhāt Mukherjee refers to this in his *History of Mediaeval Vaiṣṇavism in Orissa* (P. 107):

> Emphasis may be laid anew on the fact that the Mediaeval Vaiṣṇavism of Orissa freely absorbed religious ideas from Nāthism and Buddhism, but did not identify with either of them.

This was the prevalent religion of Orissa, prior to the advent of Sri Chaitanya, though it is not known precisely how and in what stages the cult of Kruṣna worship had crept into Orissa. But long before the Kruṣna-cult became the popular religious cult of Orissa, Kruṣna-worship was known in Orissa. Mādhabéndra Puri, the mentor of Iṣwara Puri, who had initiated Sri Chaitanya into Vaiṣṇavism, had worshipped Gopinath (the Lord of the gōpīs) at Remuna in north Orissa, on his annual pilgrimage to the south from Vrundāban. King Puruṣōttama Dév (A.D. 1479-1504) had composed many Sanskrit lyrics extolling Kruṣna's dalliance with the gōpīs out of which six lyrics have been included in the *Padāvali* or anthology of lyrics, compiled by Rūpa Gōswāmī Rāya Rāmānanda, whom Chaitanya acknowledged as his mentor, and who was also well versed in the lores of Kruṣna. But the cult of Kruṣna-worship, much less the Rādhā-Kruṣna cult based on *Sudhā-Bhakti* or *Rāgānuga Bhakti* (Emotional Devotion) was confined to a very small coterie. This would be evident from the episode, described by Krushna Dās Kavirāj Gōswāmī in his celebrated 'Chaitanya Charitāmruta,' that during the first visit of Sri Chaitanya to Orissa, in A.D. 1513, Chaitanya did not

find a favourable response in Orissa. Bāsudéva Sārvabhauma, the royal mentor of King Purusōttama Dév, had advised Sri Chaitanya to meet Rāi Rāmānanda who was then the Imperial Governor, in the southernmost outpost of the far flung Utkal Empire. Accordingly Chaitanya met Rāi Rāmānanda on the banks of the Godāvari, and while discussing the *Sādhya-Sādhan-Pranāli* or the mode of worship of Kruṣna, in line with *Rāgānuga Bhakti* had sung the famous lyric *Pahilehi rāga ranga nayanna nā vela* composed in Brajabuli. During Chaitanya's long stay in Orissa, after the conversion of king Puruṣōttama Dév into the Vaiṣṇavite faith, though the Chaitanya movement made a deep impact on the spiritual and religious life of the people, only 44 Oriyas could be counted among the 490 disciples of Sri Chaitanya in Orissa, according to Dr. Bimān Bihari Mazumdar.

In '*Ṣūnya Sanhitā*', Achyutānanda records how Chaitanya had converted the *Pancha Sakhās* or the Five Preceptors, mentors of Utkalīya Vaiṣṇavism, to his cult of pure devotion, and prevailed upon them to adjure the Tāntric and Yogic methods of religious practice. Royal patronage and the attendant benefits, no doubt, made Vaiṣṇavism, as preached by Chaitanya, a very popular religion in Orissa, but Utkalīya Vaiṣṇavas still retained their original character, so much so, that they were looked down upon as disguised Buddhists or *Prachchanna Buddhas.*

Though the Utkalīya Vaiṣṇavas had outwardly accepted the Kruṣna cult, to them Kruṣna was not the supreme god-head but an incarnation of Mahāviṣṇu or Jagannāth. "Jagannāth has sixteen aspects out of which Kruṣna is only one"—is a well-known aphorism of the Utkalīya Vaiṣṇavas. While Vrundāvan was the physical land of Kruṣna's dalliance or *Rāsa Leela* with the gōpis, *Goloka* above the *trikuta* or the trijunction of *Iḍā*, *pingala* and *susumna*, placed between the two eyebrows, was the *Nitya-Vrundāvan*, on the Eternal Vrundāvan, where Kruṣna dallied with Rādhā, surrounded by the gōpīs. Thus the *Rāsa-Leela* was metamorphosed into an esoteric, non-dualistic yogic practice. The Rādhā of the mediaeval Vaiṣṇava school of Orissa was essentially different from the Rādhā idea of the Gauḍiya

Vaiṣṇava School, preached by Chaitanya, in as much as in the Utkalīya Vaiṣṇavism, Rādhā was considered as *Jīva* and Kruṣna as *Parama*. The Lord out of his own *Ṣakti* or *Yōga-Māya* was born as the twins, Rādhā and Kruṣna. In *Ganeṣ Bibhūti* Kruṣna and Rādhā are described even as brother and sister.

Oriya literature during the period of the Sūrya dynasty kings, extending over the 15th and 16th centuries, was deeply influenced by the mediaeval Utkalīya Vaiṣṇava doctrines. Poets, who were also religious mentors, were prolific in literary works which mostly consisted of treatises and Purāṇās. Some of these, like Sarala's Oriya 'Mahabharat' and the 'Bhāgavata' of Jagannāth Dās had unmistakable literary flavour. Kāvyas also got written from the 16th century onwards. Initially they were largely free from *Ṣringāra* or erotic emotions. As impulses of love on the psychological plane played an important role in the practice of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, Oriya Kāvya literature came to be deeply influenced by erotic emotions. From the literary point of view, the Chaitanya movement in Orissa brought about a new orientation in the Oriya Kāvya literature of the later mediaeval school. The Ornate Age in Oriya literature synchronised with this period. Dīnakrushna was the link between these two periods of evolution in Oriya Kāvya literature.

4

Life of Dinakrushna

As stated earlier, historical details for reconstructing the life of Dinakrushna are extremely sketchy. Except for a few stray references about his life, no other biographical materials about the poet are available. Luckily Rāma Dās in his *Dādhatyā Bhakti*, an 18th century verse compilation of the biographical sketches of the saints and devotees of Orissa, has recorded the life story of Krushna Dās, who is probably no other than Dinakrushna Dās. Historians and critics of Oriya literature have generally relied upon this account for their facts of Dinakrushna's life.

According to *Dādhatyā Bhakti*, Dinakrushna was a resident of Puri, the seat of Lord Jagannāth. Though the *Rasakallola* is an account of Kruṣna and depicts the erotic dalliance of

Kruṣna with the gōpis of Vrundāban, he begins the Kāvya with an invocation to Jagannāth, the Lord of *Neelāchala* or Puri. From a stray reference in the fourteenth Canto, it appears that it was a matter of great happiness for the poet to attend all the rites and ceremonies in the temple from early dawn to late night. *Rasakallola* contains words which are prevalent only in the Jagannāth temple and are exclusively used in the rituals of the temple. Had Dinakrushna not been intimately connected with the temple of Lord Jagannāth, he could not have possibly used these words, or described the temple rites in such detail.

Again, according to *Dādhyatā Bhakti*, Dinakrushna was born at Puri or Puruṣōttama in a Kāraṇ or Kāyastha family. He was learned, knowledgeable and conscientious. That he was well-versed in Sanskrit cannot be gainsaid. From a study of *Rasakallola* it would appear that he had studied well the six kāvyas (*Sat-Kāvya*), *Dasakumār Charit*, *Kādambari*, the *Alankāra Shāstra* and the *Bhāgavata*. At places in *Rasakallola* also one cannot fail to notice a striking similarity of imagery and style, with the *Naisadha* of Banabhatta. It may appear that the poet was influenced by Sanskrit and Prakrit Kāvyas, even though his compositions do bear the imprint of originality. But without a thorough knowledge of Sanskrit literature and command over the Sanskrit lexicon, his vocabulary, capable of interpretation in more than one way and with more than one meaning, could not have been so enriched. Though *Rasakallola* is the only extant work of the poet, according to *Dādhyatā Bhakti*, he had also composed many Prabandha Kāvyas.

In the course of time, Dinakrushna's poetic fame reached the ears of King Dibyasingha Dév, who invited him to recite poems in his court. The king was deeply impressed and asked Dinakrushna to compose poems in his (the King's) honour. The king held out allurements to the poet and promised to reward him with land and riches if he would comply with his request. But the poet refused to do so, as he was not prepared to write in praise of anybody other than the Lord Jagannāth and to whom his poetry was dedicated. The poet's reply enraged the king, who

imprisoned him in a dark dungeon. In a stanza in the 24th Canto of *Rasakallola*, the poet makes a reference to this episode and says:

> For one who is learned and devoted to Kruṣna,
> To sing in praise of a capricious ruler,
> Is worse than death,
> Better to stab oneself than live.

And in the 16th Canto, the poet advises one not to believe kings. The *Dādhyatā Bhakti* account also corroborates the internal evidence of *Rasakallola* that the poet was the victim of royal disfavour. Never in the history of mediaeval Oriya literature, had such uncompromising utterances against the establishment been heard. In an age when poets were vying with each other to gain royal favour and patronage, Dīnakrushna's posture was undoubtedly an act of poetic freedom, unmindful of consequences. Rarely in the annals of Oriya literature, had a poet had to pay such bitter price for asserting his literary freedom. At the same time the poet was uncompromising in his exposure of the lies, deceits and pretensions in society. His satire was particularly biting of so-called fraudulent saints. The reader is reminded of the holy-men in Chaucer's 'The Canterbury Tales':

> They paint their bodies with ritualistic marks,
> A mask for their inner sins,
> Verily they look like a picture-card of the painter—
> To speak out these is painful indeed.

However, the poet was finally released from prison and was ordered out of Puruṣōttam. According to the legend, the poet was struck with leprosy, which barred his entry into the temple of Lord Jagannāth. But this could not have been the possible reason for his exile from Puri as even today Puri, not unlike the other places of pilgrimage, swarms with lepers with festering sores. The reason for his exile was probably doctrinal, to which we will come later.

The last days of the poet were spent in a desolate place on the outskirts of Puruṣōttama Puri. B.C. Mazumdar in his introduction to 'Typical Selections from Oriya Literature' (Vol. II) rightly points out that though the poet lost his place at Puri during his lifetime, he subsequently gained high place in the literature of Orissa.

5

The Ornate Age in Oriya Literature and Dinakrushna

Among the triumvirate of the Ornate Age of Oriya poetry—Dīnakrushna, Upéndra Bhanja and Abhimanyu—Dīnakrushna was the seniormost. He was the link between the early mediaeval period and the later mediaeval period of Oriya poetry. In the early mediaeval period, the Oriya kāvyas were free of artificialities, sophistry and conceits. Though in some earlier kāvyas, these features could be noticed, they were still minimal. Its style was simple and immediately pleasing (*prasāda-guṇa*), whereas the style of later mediaeval poetry was artificial and depended on complicated word play for its effect. Words were capable of many interpretations, sometimes running into a dozen. It was mere verbal jugglery which occasionally rose to deeply felt emotions. In these compositions various types of alliteration (*yamaka*) occur

which may be considered as mere pegs on which all sorts of verbal artifices were hung. Though Dinakrushna wrote *Rasakallola* generally in this ornate style, it yet had a lot of the earlier simplicity and beauty and it was executed with considerable poetic power and literary skill, the language largely free from verbosity and jugglery.

Later, towards the beginning of the 18th century, a distinct change occurred in the evolution of Oriya poetry. Poetry changed its complexion and became pedantic. To cater to the sensuousness of royal patrons and the affluent elite became its sole objective. This is known as the Rīti Age in Oriya poetry. Rīti as defined by Sanskrit prosodians, had a distinct connotation. It referred to certain natural attributes which served to make poetry fascinating, and on the other hand to certain blemishes from which the poet was enjoined upon to keep free. Vāmana was the great exponent of Rīti-Vāda. But adopting the term 'Rīti' in relation to the poetry of the 18th and the early 19th centuries, it would be wrong to understand it in its original restricted sense. Rīti, as used in the Oriya critical criterion, means a particular mode of writing, and comprehends in its scope various concepts like *Rasa*, *Alankāra* and *Dhvani*. As a matter of fact the poetic blemishes which Vāmana had enjoined upon the poets to abjure, became the *guṇas* or excellences of these poems. For example they were greatly concerned with the description of the physical beauty, from head to toe of the Nāyika or the heroine (*nakhashikha varṇana*). They used various figures of speech and were given to uninhibited depiction of carnal love, which more often than not, bordered on pornograph behind the veil of ornate poetry. In fact, Ṣringāra or love in its physical sense remained all along the preoccupation of the poets. In secular poetry it was the main aspect. In fact, of all the Rasa or poetic sentiments, Ṣringāra formed the absorbing theme of Sanskrit poetry and drama in general. A number of rhetorical treatises dealing with erotics were composed of which the earliest known and the most remarkable was Rudrabhatta's *Ṣringāra-tilaka*. Every nuance of the erotic sentiment became the subject matter and ingredient of poetry.

Secular poetry was influenced by this school of poetics while the devotional Kāvyas were largely free from it. But the gōpī and Rādhā cult of emotional-devotional Vaiṣṇavism, as popularised by Chaitanya, made the devotional poets also take to Ṣringāra as the *sṭhāyi-bhāva* or the dominant sentiment of their compositions. Rūpa Gōswāmī's *Ujjvala Nīlamoni* dealt with *Rasa* in terms of the Vaiṣṇava concept of Ṣringāra which was *Ujjvala Rasa*. S.K. Dey writes in his 'History of Sanskrit Poetics':

> The madhura rasa (Ujjvala) is represented not in its secular aspect but primarily as Bhakti-Rasa (*madhurakhyo Bhakti-Rasa*, i.3); for, according to Vaiṣṇava theology there are five Rasas, forming roughly, the five degrees of the realisation of *bhakti*, or faith, viz. *Ṣanta* (tranquility) *Dāsya* (servitude or humility, also called prīti) *Sakhya* (friendship or equality, also called *préyas*) *Vātsalya* (parental affection) and *Mādhurya* (sweetness). The last also is called *Ujjvala Rasa*, being the principal, and termed *Bhakti-rasa-raj*.
>
> The Kruṣna-rati or the love of Kruṣna forms the dominant feeling or *sthāyi-bhāva* of this sentiment and the recipient here, is not the *sahrudaya* but the Bhakta or the faithful. This *sthāyi-bhāva* or primary emotion, known as *mādhura-rati*, which is the source of the particular rasa is defined in terms of the love of Kruṣna and the nature of nāyaka and nāyikā is defined in the same manner and their feelings and emotions illustrated by adducing poems dealing with the love stories of Kruṣna and Rādhā. The work, is therefore, essentially a Vaiṣṇava religious treatise presented in a literary garb, taking Kruṣna as the ideal hero, with the caution, however, what is true of Kruṣna as the hero does not apply to the ordinary secular hero (i-18-20).

Dīnakrushna belonged to the Gauḍiya school of Vaiṣṇavism, as preached by Ṣri Chaitanya and from internal evidence in *Rasakallola* he appears to have been particularly influenced by the esoteric Sahajīya cult of the Vaiṣṇavas. Therefore, it was natural for him to have composed his magnum opus according

to the theory of poetics enunciated by Rūpa Gōswāmī in *Ujjvala-Nīlamoni*. Kruṣna is the hero and Rādhā among the gōpīs is the heroine of *Rasakallola*. It is worth noticing in this context that so far Rādhā had been almost non-existent in Oriya Vaiṣṇavite literature barring Devadurlabha's *Rahasya Manjari*, though in a different context. Even in the *Bhāgavata* of Jagannāth Dās, Rādhā was not mentioned. According to the *Bhāgavata*, Kruṣna was infatuated with love for one gōpī, among the thousands of gōpīs, and had disappeared with her from the Rāsa-arena. But the particular gōpī was not named. In Devadurlabha's *Rahasya Manjarī*, Rādhā has been mentioned in the Utkalīya Vaiṣṇavite context, that is, Kruṣna's dalliance with Rādhā in the Golaka, as distinct from Vrundāban, is the subject matter of *Rahasya Manjari*. Ṣringāra or erotics has been studiedly avoided in *Rahasya Manjarī*. Bhaktacharan Dās, a contemporary of Dīnakrushna had composed *Mathurā Mangala* a Kāvya, almost on the identical theme of *Rasakallola*. Though Bhaktacharan appears to have belonged to the *Sudha-Bhakti* (Gauḍiya) school of Vaiṣṇavism, he had avoided any mention of Rādhā In fact, not until Dīnakrushna, had Rādhā appeared on the scene in mediaeval Oriya literature. Since explicit Ṣringāra or erotic sentiments became a predominant feature of the *Rāgānuga Bhakti*, Kruṣna's erotic dalliances with the gōpīs as depicted in *Rasakallola* at places became free and open. This led B.C. Mazumdar to observe in his 'Typical Selections':

> We appreciate the poetic merits of the *Rasakallola*, but it should not be left unmentioned that the gross notions that prevailed during the days of the poet regarding te [illegible] of conjugal love has tainted many Chhandas of the book. (Introduction, P. IX)

Prof. A.B. Mohanty, in his editorial preface to *Rasakallola* also echoed the same view. But both of them failed to take into account the theological aspects of the Ṣringāra or erotic sentiments in the religious practice of the Vaiṣṇavas of the Rāgañuga School. Mazumdar was influenced by Victorian prudery and Prof. Mohanty belonged to the School of the Utkalīya Vaiṣṇavas.

6

The Rasakallola

Among the works of Dīnakrushna the *Rasakallola* and *Artātraṇa Chautīsa* are celebrated. The *Rasakallola* is a full length kāvya consisting of 34 cantos, while *Artātraṇa Chautīsa* is a long poem written in the traditional technique of Chautīsas. The Chautīsa, it may be pointed out, is a poetic form almost unique in Indian literature. The thirty-four letters of the alphabet (*Chautīs*), in the serial order, in which the poem is composed, have given the name to this form of verse. *Kéṣava Koili*, said to belong to the nascent period of Oriya literature, was written in the Chautīsa style by Mukunda Dās. Almost all the poets of Orissa, beginning from the early mediaeval period upto modern times, have composed Chautīsas on diverse themes. According to tradition, Dīnakrushna used to sing *Artātraṇa Chautīsa* daily, inside the temple, in front

of Lord Jagannāth, which was an outpouring of the agonies of his tortured being, until he was exiled from Puri. Time has not yet diminished the appeal and charm of this Chautīsa; even today its soul-stirring lines can be heard in Orissa's countryside. Besides these two works, two other poetical compositions, *Nāvakéli* and *Alankāra Boli* have also been attributed to the authorship of Dīnakrushna by B.C. Mazumdar who writes:

> The readers are bound to be charmed with the lively dramatic touches of the poet in his description in the *Nāvakéli*, of Kruṣna appearing in the disguise of a boaṭman having a parley with the gōpīs. What has been said of a scene in the *Nāva-kéli* is also applicable to those passages in the *Alankāra Boli* in which Kruṣna appears in the guise of an itinerant jeweller and the gōpīs are deep in their bargain.

But the authorship of these two minor works by Dīnakrushna Dās cannot be conclusively established. Many poets of mediaeval Oriya literature had deliberately attributed their works to other more famous contemporaries for larger acceptance and greater appreciation. These were known as *datta kāvyas*. Some minor poets might have inscribed the name of Dīnakrushna Dās in the colophone of these works to make them more acceptable. What mattered here more, was the immortalisation of the creation though not of the creator. There have been some poetic works by anonymous poets whose authorship has been ascribed to Upéndra Bhanja, though Upéndra cannot be said to have composed them. However, an estimate of Dīnakrushna's poetic merits does not depend on these two small poetic works which are of small consequence. Dīnakrushna's claim to celebrity rests solely on the single poetic work, *Rasakallola.*

Rasakallola is the most celebrated work of Dīnakrushna. For its tender grace, sweet emotions and subtle sensibilities, it has carved out for itself a permanent place in the history of Oriya literature. It is almost impossible to communicate the delicate nuances and poetical charm of *Rasakallola* to the non-Oriya readers in an alien tongue. However, to convey the theme and

subject matter of *Rasakallola* we propose to give a brief paraphrase of the cantos.

The book opens with an invocation to Lord Jagannāth, who is hailed as the supreme Avatār and the Lord of Kambu Kataka (*Ṣankha-Khétra*) or Puruṣōttama. It may be noted here that even while putting themselves under the influence of the Chaitanya movement in Orissa, the Vaiṣṇavas in Orissa looked upon Kruṣna as an incarnation of Viṣṇu and as Lord Jagannāth to them was the Mahāviṣṇu or the supreme incarnation, the first canto describes Mahāviṣṇu and the Lord's desire to take birth in Brajabhūmi as a cowherd-boy in the house of Nanda, to destroy Kamsa.

The second canto describes the prelude to Kruṣna's birth. Mother Earth had approached Brahma to save her from the tyrannies of Kamsa, the King of the Demons, Brahma appealed to Lord Jagannāth. The Lord had granted Brahma's request and promised that he would take birth in Nanda's house, to kill Kamsa. He also expressed his desire for love play with the gōpīs. In due course, Kruṣna was born as the eighth issue of Dévaki, while she was in prison along with her husband Vāsudéva. Kamsa had been forewarned that the eighth issue of Dévaki would kill him. Kamsa therefore, sent a messenger to fetch the new born baby from prison to kill him. But in the meantime the baby had been removed to the house of Nanda, whose wife had just given birth to a girl child. The babies were exchanged. When Kamsa's messenger reached the prison to take away the baby, Vāsudéva pleaded that the baby was only a girl who could pose no danger to Kamsa's life. Kamsa did not relent, but attempted to dash the baby to the ground, when she disappeared in the sky. Kruṣna in the meanwhile was safe in the household of Nanda. This follows the usual story described in the Bhāgavata but the presentation is in kāvya style. It deserves mention in this connection, that in the second canto also, Jagannāth has been described as Mahāviṣṇu, from whom all the other Viṣṇus or Avatārs have emanated.

The third canto describes the emotional excitement of the gōpīs at their knowledge that Kruṣna was born. The melody of its composition, the sweetness of its poetry, its stirrings of emotions, the passions it conveys and its judicious mixture of poetic artifices with simplicity of style, all combine to make this canto a memorable piece.

The 'moon-faced' gōpīs ran in haste to have a look at the new born son of Nanda. Some left their household chores, some ran with combs in their hands, their coiffures uncompleted; yet some left even the warm embraces of their consorts. In the depiction of the exihilarated gōpīs, effulgent with emotion, the poet has employed imagery with erotic overtones and double meaning. For instance:

In their ecstacy at the birth of Kruṣna
As the gōpīs ran hurriedly,
It seemed as if Kruttibasa was dancing as Ṣambhu,
In joy. . . .

In this stanza, Kruttibasa was Ṣiva who derived this name for being covered by elephant skin, and Ṣambhu meant the phallic image. The imagery suggests that the pointed breasts of the gōpīs were dancing in rhythm with their steps. To the enamoured gōpīs, the infant Kruṣna appeared as the incarnation of the love god and some had no hesitation in contemplating:

When this infant will bloom into youth,
What will happen to the woman at whom he will glance,
The housewives will leave their homes,
And the chaste will lose their chastity.

These are indicative of the erotic emotions (*madhura rasa*) with which the gōpīs adored Kruṣna. Kamsa deputes Pūtana, the demoness in disguise, with poisoned breasts, to kill the infant Kruṣna. The description of Pūtana in the guise of a charming woman decorated with various ornaments is vivid and eloquent. But Kruṣna with his companions kills Pūtana (4th canto.)

The 5th canto describes the exploits of the infant Kruṣna with the gōpīs. He was the cynosure of all eyes. The gōpīs or the milkmaids were vying with each other in their infatuation for the infant. The description of the crawling infant has been executed with masterly skill. Soon Kruṣna becomes mischievous and starts stealing the milk and butter from the homes of the milkmaids, which enrages them. But the gōpīs' mixed feelings of anger and love experienced usually during coitus, according to the *Kāmshāstra* or *Kilakinchita* give way to the emotion of great passion (*mottayita*). The gōpīs began to wonder wherefrom the infant, who was born only the other day before their eyes, could learn these erotic tricks. One day a gōpīs asks, "Why don't you come to my house? You will get plenty of milk and butter to eat." Kruṣna replied with a mischievous twinkle, "How much water (*pāni*) is mixed with your milk (*dūdha*)?" This is an illustration of word play. *Pāni* means water as also the hand, and *dūdha* means milk as well as in colloquial speech, a female breast. The meanings in the above conversation between the gōpī and Kruṣna are obvious and need no further elaboration. Soon the gōpīs become blind in their passionate love for the child Kruṣna.

In this context, it may be mentioned that the *Bālagōpāl* cult or the cult of the infant Gōpāl (cowherd) Kruṣna, usually represented in a crawling posture, was the earliest manifestation of Vaiṣṇavism in Orissa. Bālagōpāl used to be worshipped with *Vātsalya rasa* or parental love. But in course of time it got tinged with Ṣringāra or the erotic emotion which was illustrated by the gōpīs' blind infatuation for the infant Kruṣna. Danāi Dās, an earlier poet, in his *Gōpī Bhāṣa*, had already given literary expression to it.

The sixth canto is devoted to the exploits of Kruṣna and in this phase, the cowherd boys were the chief companions of Kruṣna. He begins to tend kine in the forests of Vrundāban with other cowherd boys. As a cowherd boy, he killed Batsāsura and Arghāsura, the two demons who were terrorising and oppressing the people. The cowherd boys. impressed with the miraculous

powers of Kruṣna, became his devotees and admirers and worshipped Kruṣna in *Sākhya Bhāva* or mood of camaraderie and friendship. As Kruṣna grows into early youth, the infatuation of the gōpīs for him begins to increase and reaches passionate heights. This canto has been written with exquisite poetic skill, vividness and intensity. Very fascinating pictures have been drawn and figures of speech have been employed to describe the emotions of the gōpīs for the youthful Kruṣna.

> Gōpīs unable to contain their passions
> Made many an enticing gesture;
> Some lifted their delicate arms,
> Some walked in graceful steps,
> And yet some others opened their breasts
> To excite His passion.

This description faithfully follows the ways of the heroine (Nāyikā) described in the 'Kāmāshastra' to entice the hero (Nāyaka). This is an illustration of the *Ujjvala rasa*, an important aspect of the Rāgānuga Bhakti of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. But that these apparent carnalities were mere feelings on the psychological or mental plane has been emphasized by Dīnakrushna in the 32nd stanza:

> Some made a garland of their arms to decorate
> Kruṣna in their mind,
> Some took refuge in Kruṣna in their words,
> mind and action.

The lyrical verse delineates Kruṣna's desire to indulge in erotic relationship with the gōpīs. He sent washer women, dancing girls, flower girls, dresser girls and women painters, as go-betweens to the gōpīs, with indication of secret places for trysts. Kruṣna also takes to many guises according to his whims for reaching the places of tryst, such as, bangle seller, fisherman, flower seller, tax collector, even a ghost. Kruṣna's dialogue with the gōpīs is replete with poetic witticisms and is highly suggestive. These lines are executed with immense charm and

refined sensibility. Kruṣna teases a gōpī:

Your waist is slim,
But the breasts as heavy as the hills,
Yet you walk majestically like an elephant;
Who can call you a coward?
The lotus-faced gōpī smiled and replied,
"Have the fruits ever been heavy for the creeper?"

The canto under review is very important from the point of Dīnakrushna's religious cult. It may be recalled that among the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas there were also Vaiṣṇava-Sahajīyas or Vaiṣṇavas practising the esoteric Sahaja cult, which at one time had pervaded Buddhism. Rai Rāmānanda of Orissa, a distinguished poet and contemporary of Chaitanya, was well-versed in the practices of this cult. In the 28th stanza Kruṣna says:

I will be a subject only of the rough-tempered,
    radiant, King of Sahaja
And serve Him by paying tributes
I ask for nothing more; only this is my prayer.

The Sahajīya cult which was initially a romantic and emotional reaction against the cold celibacy of Buddhism, subsequently degenerated into sexual perversities of the Vajrayāṇa and Tāntric Buddhism. But a streak of it was flowing all through the religious history of India and had also crept into Vaiṣṇava cult and practices. This was known as Sahajīya-Vaiṣṇavism. Dīnakrushna in the 34th stanza gives an allegorical expression to the cult:

The insects eat into hard timber,
Yet they serve in surrender the delicate flowers.

To conquer carnal passions through passion, desire through desire, and flesh through flesh, was the matrix in which this doctrine had been cast.

The eighth canto is one of the finest pieces mediaeval Oriya poetry, particulary for its figurative speech, alliterative composition and suggestibility. It is almost a continuation of the subject matter of the seventh canto, though executed in ornate style. Kruṣna adresses a gōpī in cajoling words:

"Beloved, your body is verily
Efflorescent like the Kétaki flower,
But my misfortune is,
The Kruṣna (dark) bee could not enjoy it."
To which, the gōpī replies,
"Will this beauty last for ever,
This will fade, as soon as
The Kruṣna-bee kisses it."

Looking at the thighs of a gōpī Kruṣna says:

"I see a strange sight indeed;
The elephant tramples upon the trees,
But the banana-plants of your thighs,
have tied down the mind
Which is like a mad elephant."

The ninth canto depicts the hysterical emotions of the gōpīs for sport with Kruṣna in the waters of the Yamuna. One day Kamsa sent orders to Nanda to send a hundred bouquets of lotus flowers. Nanda was terrified at this tall order, as the much dreaded snake Kāliya resided in the waters of the Yamuna from where the flowers were to be collected. But to collect these flowers from the waters of the Yamuna was just child's play for Kruṣna. He entered the waters as playfully as a dancer enters the dancing hall. The snake encircled itself around Kruṣna who looked like a dark cloud on a black mountain. Kruṣna crushed the snake to death and started dancing on its crown like an excited peacock, against the background of dark clouds over the tamala forest. The destruction of the dreadful Kāliya sent waves of happiness among the gōpīs, so long unable to enter the waters of the Yamuna for fear of the snake. Now they longed for water sports.

with Kruṣna in the waters of the river. They approached Rādhā with a variety of cosmetics and invited her to join them in the water sports:

Rādhā replies smiling,
I tell thee, dear friends, I love nothing more than
The dark-hued waters.

The gōpīs said:

"Let us press him with our hard pointed breasts,
And with the scratch-marks of our nails
Deflate his pride,
Once the elephant tastes the juice of the sugarcane
He will come everyday."

This canto is important in as much as Rādhā as the sensuous heroine or *nāyikā*, appears for the first time in Oriya Kāvya literature.

The tenth canto is devoted to the water sports of the gōpīs with Kruṣna. The style and imagery employed in this canto is almost modern. The style of Rādhānāth Ray (late 19th century), the father of modern Oriya poetry, is not far removed from the style of this canto. Though the subject matter of the canto provides ample scope for erotic extravagance, it is comparatively free of it.

The description of the seasons in their many picturesque aspects particularly in the Sanskrit epic style, is a common feature in Oriya Kāvya literature. The different seasons are treated as colourful backgrounds for depicting the different moods of the hero and the heroine, in union and in separation. The eleventh canto begins with winter. The days begin to shorten and the lotus flowers cease to bloom. In the course of the description of the winter season, the poet portrays the wretched, pitiable condition of the poor who have no clothes to cover their bodies. Some clasp their arms while shivering, some cross their arms across

their bare breasts, some crouch and yet some others longingly pray for sunrise. To the materially more fortunate, mad with passion, the nights seem as intolerable as eternity in the absence of a woman. To Kruṣna the wintry nights provide ample opportunities for erotic dalliance with the gōpīs. Mischievous dialogue between Kruṣna and the gōpīs ensures, apparently bawdy but live with poetic wit:

> To gōpīs, Kruṣna says artfully;
> I am shivering in cold
> And searching for warmth,
> But you have hidden the warmth
>   between your thighs,

To which the gōpī replies coyly:

> How could you know it?
> If you are so cunning
> And shivering in cold,
> Why don't you seek refuge in my lap?

Throughout the winter Kruṣna indulges in love play with the gōpīs, in postures not described even in the 'Kāmashāstra'. Though the canto is created with erotic motifs, it ends with devotional perorations:

> Meditate only upon the image of Kruṣna,
> Sing His hymns only,
> Hear only His life-story,
> And know the world as Kruṣna personified.

The seasons have been described in cyclic order. The twelfth canto is devoted to the depiction of spring. It is composed in an alliterative manner, using erotic motifs, metaphors and figures of speech. Some stanzas also portray elaborate poetic conceits. The scenes are laid in the gardens of Braja or Vrundāban. The stanzas paint spring in the picturesque hues of flowers and foliage, and vignettes are sketched almost like miniature paintings to depict

a scene or a sentiment. The season of spring, associated in Kāvya literature with love, excites the erotic sentiments in the hearts of the gōpīs. Its beauty and charm cannot be perhaps communicated in any other way except in the original Oriya.

The thirteenth canto is a continuation of the previous canto, executed in an almost similar allegorical style. The subject matter is also identical and has the witty dialogue and love play of the gōpīs with Kruṣna.

Spring is the poetic soul of *Rasakallola*. The creative passion of the poet to portray the season of flowers is as if insatiable. The 14th canto is also a description of spring done in a breath-takingly modern style. The metrical arrangements of this canto have been followed even by poets of the first three decades of the 20th century. The vocabulary used in the canto is simple and direct and it makes the poetic communication easy and effortless. This canto bears eloquent testimony to the modern sensibility or modernity of this mediaeval poet. The chief sentiment of this canto is the pangs of pain (*Biprālambha*) of the gōpīs in separation from Kruṣna. According to Vaiṣṇava poetics, the emotions of the lovers when they are separated is more intense than when they are united. While the earlier two cantos were composed to depict the raptures of the gōpīs in union with Kruṣna, the 14th canto gives expression to their grief when they are separated. Kruṣna is no less stricken with grief on separation from a particular gōpī, not named. She may be Rādhā. Kruṣna enquires the whereabouts of this unnamed gōpī from the others: "Have you seen the creeper of sweet sentiments? Since yesterday she has hidden herself somewhere in sensitive affection." One gōpī replies, "Can the wasp ever get the honey of the sky flower?"

The description of early dawn is done with captivating charm. The philanderer returns from his nocturnal sports. The jilted heroine, in a mood of anger mixed with joy, asks, "Tell me, where did you spend the night, with whom? Your body is covered with the tell-tale marks of nails and teeth". Young women

were also returning home, after spending the night of forbidden love, with nail and tooth marks on their breasts. The sensuous passages of this canto are illustrative of the sentiment of extra marital love (*parakīya rati*), with which Kruṣna was worshipped on the psychological and emotional plane. *parakiya*, since it was forbidden being more potent than *srakīya* (love with one's own wife).

The 15th canto depicts the well-known episode of the *vastraharan* or stealing of garments, of the gōpīs, described in the *Bhāgavata*. The summer season has provided the background for this romantic episode which is imbued with a mystic symbolism by Vaiṣṇava theologians. But what is important here is the enchanting poetry and humour, and not so much its mystic significance. The description of the summer season has been done in a superb style using metaphors and images, which have even influenced the poets of modern times. On the scorched earth he says, the feet of the wearied travellers were dancing like horses on the battle-front, the whirlwind was sweeping like the *bhramari* (a pose in Odissi dance) and the days were tortured like the mind of a householder burdened with a large family. Further:

The mirages looked like the fleeting
    glances of a doe-eyed damsel,
The forest fires burst into flames
Like flashes of lightning in dark clouds.

The scorching heat of the summer makes the gōpīs long for water sports in the Yamuna. They entered its waters naked, in glee, and indulge in uninhibited sport, "As the lotus-faced gōpīs entered the waters, the lotus and lily blossoms were excited." While plucking the lotus flowers, the petals touch the breasts of the gōpīs, which, to the poet seemed "flowery oblations to Lord Shiva". Kruṣna is all the while watching the rapturous water sport of the gōpīs, perched on the branch of a Kadamba tree on the bank of the Yamuna. At his behest, the wind sweeps away the garments of the gōpīs to the branches of the tree. The water

sport over, the naked gōpīs come out of the water, and are shocked and surprised to find their garments stolen away. However, they see Kruṣna on the Kadamba tree mischievously enjoying the sight of the naked gōpīs. The gōpīs in desperation raise their arms imploring Kruṣna to return them the stolen garments, as they were only His servitors and knew no other God than Him. After a witty exchange, Kruṣna gives back the garments and the gōpīs return to Gōkul in joy, "covering their voluptuous breasts".

The rainy season follows summer and the 16th canto depicts Kruṣna's dalliance with the gōpīs in the romantic mood of the rainy season. The depiction of nature with its ruffled moods gives the effect of a naturalistic painting. At the same time happy combination of poetic conceits with a simple and elegant style makes this canto very vivid. The rainy season is traditionally associated with the amorous indulgences of lovers in kāvya literature. The poet paints the amorous scenes with remarkable skill and wit. Kruṣna spends the rain-drenched, sweetly perfumed nights in sport with the gōpīs. Though the subject matter and its depiction are patently secular, clearly suggestive of natural responses between men and women, the poet warns the readers not to read the lines in this literal sense, but to imbibe the *rasa* or sentiments with Kruṣna-consciousness. He warns those who may imbue it with sordid sensibilities, with eternal perdition. The canto is illustrative of *rāgānuga bhakti* or the emotional-devotionist cult of the sect of Vaiṣṇavism to which the poet belonged.

The *rāsa*-dance or group dance of the gōpīs with Kruṣna is the central motif of the Vaiṣṇava cult. When Kruṣna as a dancer dances in abandon, encircled by a bevy of dancing girls who are gōpīs in this case, the group dance is called a *rāsa*-dance. But this to the initiated is more an exercise in spiritual devotion than in lustful indulgence, involving sensual gratification on the material plane. The transcendental desire of the gōpīs to please Kruṣna through dancing is the supreme emotion of the *rāsa*-dance. The 17th, 18th and 19th cantos have been devoted to a

picturesque depiction of this romantic theme.

After the rains, comes autumn with "miserly clouds", and the clouds are terrifying only in their loud rumbling. The description of the autumnal beauty of nature bears eloquent testimony to the poetic genius of Dīnakrushna. The *rāsa*-dance provides the poet the peg for displaying his poetic skill. The autumnal moonlit night excites, Kruṣna's desire for *rāsa*-dance with the gōpīs. He entices them to come to the *rāsa*-arena, by playing his flute. Its scintillating melody enraptures the gōpīs and they run away from their homes in unseemly haste in response to Kruṣna's desire. The enraptured and almost hypnotic state of the gōpīs has been described with rare poetic skill. Some were dressing themselves for the occasion, but the lilting song of the flute makes them leave their toilet incomplete, and they run in haste to the *rāsa*-arena. Some can not find time to complete their elaborate coiffure. Some paint their eyelashes with *kastūrī*, mistaking it for colyrium. Some put necklaces around their ankles, and their waist jewels around their necks. The description bespeaks intense emotion. As many streams rush in haste to join the depth of the sea, so the gōpīs are rushing to join Kruṣna in the *rāsa*-arena. The gōpīs forsake their natural inhibitions and rouse Kruṣna by seductive, postures. Some throw suggestive side-glances at him, others bare their breasts. After an exchange of witty dialogue, the gōpīs begin their *rāsa*-dance.

The ecstasy of the love play of Kruṣna with Rādhā is the subject of the 20th canto. Even though Brundābati Dāsi in *Prabandha Purna Chandrōdaya* and Bhaktacharan Dās in *Mathurā Mangala* have treated the same theme in their kāvyas, none of them made mention of Rādhā. In fact, Rādhā as a *nāyikā* or heroine. as mentioned earlier, was so far not known in mediaeval Oriya Kāvya literature. The poet has described the love play of Kruṣna with Rādhā after the *rāsa*-dance. In their rapturous embrace, Rādhā and Kruṣna look like "gold brocade in a blue garment", or like "lightening in a dark cloud". Kruṣna whispers into the ears of Rādhā—"People are giving precedence to you over me, and by reciting the names of Rādhā-Kruṣna are redeeming

themselves from the miseries of this mundane existence." The love play over, Rādhā feels tired and exhausted and pleads her inability to walk the distance. Kruṣna, "blind with passion", smiles and invites her to sit on his shoulder. Rādhā sitting across the shoulders of Kruṣna looks like a "golden peak on a dark mountain". Thus Rādhā, comfortably perched on the shoulders of Kruṣna, is filled with the pride of fulfilment.

The 21st canto opens with Rādhā's secret thoughts: "I am lucky indeed. There were many gōpīs who had courted Kruṣna eagerly, but none ·could claim His affections exclusively except myself. He wears me like a wreath of flowers in his hair". Kruṣna, knowing Rādhā's secret feelings wants to deflate her pride. On the pretext of plucking flowers from the forest, He asks Rādhā to climb down from his shoulders and rest at a particular place for a while. But the moments go on and she is waiting for the return of Kruṣna like an "avid one living on the promises of a miserly patron". She moans "Why hast thou deserted me, as a bee does after kissing the flower?"

In the meantime the gōpīs are also searching for Kruṣna in the forest in mortified agony. They ask an Ashōk tree, "Why don't you remove our *shōka* (grief), why do you stand mute and silent". In their despondence, the gōpīs start pouring out their bitter grievances against Kruṣna. The agonies of separation (*biprālambha*) are as powerful as the bliss of union (*sambhōga*). In both conditions, the lover is nearest to the Soul. If Rādhā had; the privilege of enjoying union with Kruṣna the gōpīs also experience the same bliss in separation. Soon the lilting tunes of Kruṣna's flute reach the ears of the gōpīs and they grow eager to meet Him. Their emotions have been expressed in picturesque poetry—"Of what use are the breasts like golden pots, if they cannot attract Kruṣna's attention", "Of what use is the golden flower, if it has no fragrance", "!The wild jasmine lies hidden in the forest, what pleasure does one get from its sweet smell". Entering the cool waters of the Yamuna, the gōpīs wail: "Oh, Yamuna! You are fortunate indeed, for you have got love of your sire. But we are miserable in separation from Him." After endless

hours of agonised waiting, Kruṣna, the eternal lover, appears before the gōpīs, smiling and radiant.

The 23rd canto describes the transports of the sensual love of Kruṣna for the gōpīs with all the exuberance of oriental fancy. To the mystic, these may appear symbolic of the final reconciliation of the individual soul with the universal soul, but the denouement of the theme is patently sensuous and secular. On beholding Kruṣna the gōpīs said that they had been struck with Kāma (God of Love) in His absence. Chivalrously Kruṣna assures the gōpīs to fight the Kāma and then from One, He became many, to indulge in love sport with the gōpīs and satiate their desire.

The golden-hued gōpīs,
Appeared like golden chariots
To which Kruṣna became the charioteer.
Golden flashes of lightening became still
on dark clouds,
Gold was with lapis lazuli
The wild bee moved around in the
midst of golden lotus-flowers.

The "battle of love" grows more intense and excited. The bells tied to the waists of the gōpīs provided the "marital" music. The depiction of the love-play of the gōpīs with Kruṣna, follows the classical description of Vātṣāyana's *Kāma-Sūtra.* Both the gōpīs and Kruṣna were adepts in the various arts of *ādi-rāsa* or the primay emotion of sex, which the poet describes as the *ujjvala-rasa* (pure emotion), in accordance with Vaiṣṇava-prosody, enunciated by the Gōswāmīs of Vrundāban. They indulge in many coital postures, not known even to Kāmadéva, the God of love. After Kruṣna satiated Himself, the gōpīs begin their indulgences in the inverse posture (*biparīta-rati*) in which Kruṣna played the passive role while the gopīs are active. The depiction of inverse coitus has been rendered with masterly skill, almost free from any suggestion of obscenity.

Though the 24th canto depicts the exhausted and tired gōpīs after their erotic indulgences, at the same time it contains a detailed description of the early morning rituals of Lord Jagannāth inside the temple. This canto contains some autobiographical references from which it appears that while midway through the composition of the kāvya, he was exiled from Puruṣōttama or Puri. To associate Lord Jagannāth with the erotic excesses of Kruṣna and the gōpīs may appear unusual but it bears testimony to the fact that the Rādhā-Kruṣna cult could not prevail over the Jagannāth-cult of the Utkalīya Vaiṣṇavas in the post-Chaitanya period.

With the 24th canto ends the Gōpa-Līlā or the sport of Kruṣna in Gōpa of Vrundāban in company with the gōpīs. The 25th canto is the prelude to Kruṣna's Mathurā-Līlā or dallying Kruṣna in Mathurā, which ends with the destruction of the tyrant Kamsa. The kāvya has almost been divided in equal halves between the Gōpa-Līlā and the Mathura-Līlā. Though Bhaktacharan wrote his *Mathurā Mangala* on an identical theme, in him Kruṣna's Mathurā-Līlā and the destruction of Kamsa got precedence over his sport with the gōpīs. In *Rasakallola* the order has been reversed, perhaps to emphasise the *rāgānuga bhakti* or emotional devotionist cult of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism as distinct from the Utkalīya Vaiṣṇavism.

In the meantime Kamsa is becoming increasingly apprehensive of Kruṣna who had by then already annihilated Kéṣi and other demons. One day while holding court Kamsa boasts that he would not delay any longer in killing Kruṣna. Sycophant courtiers support Kamsa's boastings with exaggerated enthusiasm "Is there anybody more powerful than you?," or "Lord after all Kruṣna is a cowherd boy. Let messengers be despatched without delay to fetch him here and now." The sycophancy of the courtiers has been drawn by the poet in a very realistic style.

The wise men present in Kamsa's court, keep silent at Kamsa's schemings, for fear of losing royal favour. The poet's aspersions on these wise men who acquiesce in all the misdeeds of the

tyrants for petty gains and favours has a universal import and has not lost its relevance even today. No wonder, the poet during his life-time was excommunicated from the society of the elite and exiled from Puri, the seat of power of King Dibyasingha Dév. Ironically, Kamsa summoned Akrūra, a devotee of Kruṣna to go to Gōpa (Vrundāban) to fetch the two brothers, Kruṣna and Balarām, to witness the Dhanuyātrā (the Festival of Bows) in Mathurā, which would provide the opportunity for killing them. The gōpīs are struck with grief when they learnt of Kruṣna's departure for Mathurā; the separation is too much for them to bear.

The lamentation of the gōpīs is the subject of the 26th canto. The gōpīs bewail:

Thy heart is as hard as the thunderbolt,
Our breasts too are hard,
We do not know,
How they became so hard and at whose touch.

Kruṣna consoles the gōpīs:

You have owned me by your sweet emotion.
How can I be separated from you,
I am as inseparable from you as Shiva is from Pārvatī.

Thus consoling them, Kruṣna mounts the chariot of Akrūra and soon is on his way to Mathurā.

Kruṣna accompanied by his brother Balarām, reaches Mathurā, the capital of Kamsa. The citizens of Mathurā are struck with wonder at the physical charm and grace of Kruṣna and Balarām.

The rainbow descended upon the earth,
Clouds hovered in the autumn sky.

The women of Mathurā grow excited at the sight of Kruṣna and Balarām and rush to see them, leaving their domestic chores. The coverings of the breasts of some women are displaced in the hurry and their throbbing breasts can be seen. The more they try to cover their breasts, the more they fail,

The sight reminded the poet, that
Shiva does not wear garments.

Kruṣna and Balarām, in the meanwhile, give a foretaste of their power by killing the launderer of Kamsa over a trifle, Kubujā, a hunchbacked woman, is out on the streets with her wares to paint the ladies of Mathurā, and is struck with the "arrows of passion" at the sight of Kruṣna and Balarām and can not resist the temptation of painting their bodies with perfumed colour. This *ahétuki-bhakti* (devotion without cause) moves Kruṣna to compassion and by his touch he straightens her body. Kubujā, the hunchbacked woman, turns into a beautiful woman. Then Kruṣna and Balarām enter the armoury of Kamsa. They break the powerful bows of Kamsa, as effortlessly as one breaks the "reeds of sugarcane" (27th canto).

The 29th canto describes Kruṣna's encounter with the elephant keeper or the mahout of Kamsa. Upon seeing Kruṣna and Balarām, the mahout taunts them at the entrance of Kamsa's fort. This is provocative enough for Kruṣna to tear the tusks of the powerful elephant apart, which strikes the onlookers with wonder. After their heroic exploits, Kruṣna and Balarām enter the Rangasabhā or the Court of Kamsa. Soon Chaṇura, the most powerful among Kamsa's wrestlers, pounces upon Kruṣna to crush Him to death, according to a pre-arranged plan. But Kruṣna kills him at the first encounter. The death of Chaṇura so unnerves Kamsa that he too dies in fear. Kruṣna annoints Ugraséna as the King of Mathurā in place of Kamsa and the people of Mathurā are redeemed from the tyrannies of a despot.

The 29th canto is also a continuation of the exploits of Kruṣna in Mathurā. After killing Kamsa, Kruṣna consoles His

aunt, Kamsa's wife. Kruṣna's consolation of His aunt has a sardonic humour about it as He is paying a left-handed compliment to Kamsa, his uncle. Then He releases His father and mother, Vāsudéva and Dévaki, who had been imprisoned by Kamsa. After sending away His cowherd friends to Gōpa, with the message that He would be returning soon, He indulges in erotic sport with Kubujā. But all the while Kruṣna is pining for the gōpī maidens and the *rāsa*-dance in Vrundāban.

The 30th canto is a repetition of the anguish of the lover when separated from his beloved. Kruṣna is pining for union with Rādhā and is indulging in fanciful imaginings about her, bemoaning his separation from her.

In the cult of emotional devotion or *rāgānuga bhakti*, the Lover (Supreme Soul) pines as intensely for the Beloved (individual soul) for their dualistic union in a non-dualistic state as the individual soul does for the Supreme. The 31st canto is a continuation of the sentiments described in the previous canto. Rādhā also reciprocates the sentiments of anguish in her separation from Kruṣna. Kruṣna finally sends Uddhaba to the gōpīs.

Tell them, oh Uddhaba,
Tell the gōpīs, adept in the erotic arts,
That my days are endless misery
In separation from them all.

At the bidding of Kruṣna, Uddhaba mounts his chariot and leaves for Gōpa.

On reaching Gōpa, Uddhaba is eagerly questioned by the gōpīs about the well-being of Kruṣna. Uddhaba replies, "He is all right, except that He is anguished by your absence. Your love (*bhāva*) is His only want (*abhāva*)". The gōpīs are obviously agitated over Kruṣna's affairs with Kubujā and are burning with envy. They indict Kruṣna for his flippant behaviour and beseech Uddhaba to bring back Kruṣna as soon as he can (32nd canto).

The 33rd Canto is a repetition of the emotions and sentiments of the love-struck gōpīs.

The kāvya ends abruptly in the 34th canto, in as much as Kruṣna's return to Gōpa and His reunion with the gōpīs and Rādhā has not been described, as is usually done in the secular kāvyas. Bhaktacharan's *Mathurā mangala* also ends on a similar note of incompleteness.

This was the usual matrix or mould in which such kāvyas based on emotional devotion (*rāgānuga bhakti*) were cast; the emotion of separation being more intense than the emotion of union, the devotee had to sublimate these apparently physical impulses. Moreover, it also emphasises the fact the God or the Supreme Soul pines for the devotee or the individual soul with as much intensity as the individual soul does for the universal soul. In describing the emotions of the gōpīs separated from Kruṣna the poet describes the ten stages of separation (*biprālambhaṣringāra*) described in the *Kāmasūtra*, that is, (1) pining for physical union with the lover, (2) broodings over the lover, (3) memories of the lover's sweet company, (4) recitation of his qualities, (5) mental restlessness, (6) moaning, (7) madness, (8) indisposition, (9) listlessness and (10) the subliminal state of thrill. Uddhaba reports the condition of the grief-stricken gōpīs to Kruṣna in moving lines:

The bangles of some have become their armlets,
Some have worn their necklaces around their thighs,
Some by muttering Thy name and surrendering
them to passion,
Have immersed themselves in the half-closed eyes
in a listless state.

Rasakallola, apart from its religious and mystical meanings and overtones of Vaiṣṇavism, has a strong secular structure and depicts love in all its glory.

7

Poetic Innovations of Rasakallola

We have already referred to the *Chautīsa* form of Oriya verse in which each line of a couplet in a stanza is arranged in the serial order of the consonants. The 34 letters, from *Ka* to *Ksha*, in the serial order, in which these verses are composed, give the name to this pattern. According to this, the first letter of the first couplet begins with *Ka*, the first consonant. The lines of the second couplet with *Kha*, the second consonant, till the last consonant *Ksha*. But never before Dīnakrushna had any poet attempted to compose an extensive kāvya of 34 cantos and 1258 stanzas, with each line beginning with *Ka*. Dīnakrushna had begun *Rasakallola* with each line of each couplet of each stanza in the first canto beginning with the letter *Ka* and also ending with *Ka*. But he perhaps felt cramped and stifled with the artificiality of this style

and in subsequent cantos, though each line began with *Ka*, it ended with different letters. According to tradition, Upéndra Bhanja found fault with the title *Rasakallola* for in his opinion the title should have had also *Ka* as the first letter. To prove his point, Upéndra Bhanja composed his magnum opus *Vaidehisa Vilāsa* and his comparatively smaller works *Kalā Kautūka* and *Subhadrā Pariṇaya* conforming to this rule. But actually Dīnakrushna was the innovator of this kāvya style and Upéndra is said to have publicly acknowledged his debt to him. A verse said to have been composed by Upéndra Bhanja is widely recited to prove the influence of Dīnakrushna upon Upéndra, the purport of which is:

> Declares Upéndra lifting his arms,
> He regards none under the sun to be a poet worth the name;
> He only salutes reverentially the poets,
> Jayadéva and Dīnakrushna,
> And as to other so called poets, he touches their
> heads with his left foot.

Highly insolent no doubt, but a rich tribute to the poetic genius of Dīnakrushna.

Dīnakrushna deserves special mention in the evolution of Oriya poetry for another important reason. The kāvyas of early mediaeval times were usually composed by using mainly colloquial Oriya words, abjuring the use of sanskritised vocabulary to a large extent. This was best seen in the writings of Saralā Dās, Balarām Dās and Jagannāth Dās, the triumvirate of early Oriya literature who avoided sanskritised words as much as they could. But colloquial Oriya though not lacking in expressiveness and native poetical flavour, was not exactly an adequate medium for ornate poetry. Dīnakrushna made a judicious mixture of Sanskrit (*divya*) words with Oriya vernacular (*adivya*) words and enunciated in *Rasakallola* "true poetry is possible by a happy blending of the *divya* and *adivya* words." Upéndra Bhanja and Abhimanyu Sāmantasinghāra, the other two poets of the second triumvirate also followed this injunction. This happy commingling of

sanskritised with Oriya words brought out a new poetic speech, which was as elegant as picturesque. Some cantos of *Rasakallola* are replete with sanskritised words while other cantos have been composed with unadorned colloquial Oriya speech.

Music has remained the forte of the Oriya kāvyas from the very beginning. Unlike kāvyas in other languages, the Oriya kāvyas were written more for purposes of singing than reading. In fact the musical quality of mediaeval Oriya kāvyas has made them communicable to the untutored and unsophisticated masses, despite their pedantic and ornamental style. The emotions of the kāvyas have been very successfully communicated through the melody. That explains the mystery of the tenacious survival of archaic mediaeval poetry even in modern times of changed taste and temper. Upéndra's poetry, though it baffles more often than not even the learned pundits and scholars, is eagerly relished and keenly appreciated by the unlettered masses for its captivating music. The 34 cantos of *Rasakallola* have been written in different *rāgas*, which have been indicated in each case with directions for singing. Some of the *rāgas* like *Sangam Tiari* (1st Canto) *Chokhi* (2nd Canto), *Gujjari Paditala* (5th Canto) may be mentioned in this connection. The diversification not only relieves the monotony but also adds richness and music to the verses. These *chhandas* have sustained and nourished Oḍīssi music across the centuries.

Nature in *Rasakallola* is effulgent and vibrant with colour and passion. It would be truistic to say that the mediaeval poets of Oriya literature vied with each other in depicting nature according to her seasonal moods, as background for the varying passions and emotions of the hero or the heroine. Nature played a vital role in mediaeval Oriya kāvyas, and afforded an opportunity to the poets to display their poetic skill. Dīnakrushna excels all other mediaeval poets in the depiction of nature. He neither imitated his predecessors, which was an annoying feature of mediaeval Oriya poetry, nor indulged in unnecessary verbosity. His stanzas were delicately etched cameos of enchanting poetry. Accurate presentation and economy of diction were the remark-

able features of Dīnakrushna's description of nature. His sensibility was refreshingly modern and his imagery was strikingly contemporary. It may be pointed out that it is almost impossible to communicate in a language other than the original the poetic beauty of Dīnakrushna's description of the seasons. However, we cannot curb the temptation of translating a few stanzas from his description of the winter season.

In course of the yellow-robed Kruṣna's sport
the winter set in in Gōpa,
The days became shorter and the lotus
blooms perished in the cold.

The Fire as though afraid of the pangs of the winter
sought refuge in every hearth and home,
People started beseeching him, troubled
how to endure the winter's bitter shafts;

Soon the cold spread its icy fingers,
Some shivering folded their arms,
Some with arms crossed across their breasts
cursed the winter in bitter tongues;

Some crept into warm beds,
And yet others yearned for the sun;
The lovers harassed by the winter
Sought refuge in the arms of their beloveds,

And for those who were lonely and single
The wintry nights seemed an endless age;
The lover struck with erotic passions,
Made his heart the bed

Upon which he laid his beloved,
And whispered into her ears in
the *Viparīta* posture,
And couples mad with coital rapture
entwined their bodies like light and shadow......

Alas! the barebodied ones,
Have no other succour except their thighs,
    the Sun, and the fire,
To save them from the winter's ravages; ...

How bitter is the cold!
And when shall we be free of this scourge? ...

8

Eroticism and Rasakallola

We have already pointed out how, to some critics of *Rasakallola*, some of the cantos appear "gross conceptions" of "conjugal love". But such views arise from an inadequate understanding of the metaphysical content of emotional-devotionism as also of the tradition of Indian poetry. Kāmadév or the love god of Indian tradition was not confined to the poetry and art of later classical literature, but became the centre of an actual cult, and this cult influenced contemporary religious and literary movements in varying degrees. In poetry, its influence has been the greatest.

The Prākrit poets, who were earlier to Kālidāsa, wrote in studied language and metre, which had a lot of erotic content.

Even Indian critics have censured Kālidāsa, for breach of propriety in painting the love adventures of the divine pair of *Kumar-Sambhava*. But the love that Jayadév depicts in *Geeta-Govinda*, apart from its symbolical and spiritual meaning, is a reflex of the human emotions and the divine Kruṣna and his consort are entirely humanized. Indeed Jayadév's poem was one of the best examples of that erotic mysticism which inspired most of the beautiful Vaiṣṇava lyrics and kāvyas in the regional literatures. The allegedly carnal scenes or obscene portrayals were not sensuous levity, but suggest an attitude and a mode of approach to the Supreme. They make it clear that the subject of *Kāma* or sex was taken up with the same seriousness and objectivity as that of *dharma*, *artha* and even of *moksha*. In this background of the erotic-mystic substance of Indian poetry, *Rasakallola* should not be tainted with the charge of obscenity. Its high tolerance of sex is in keeping with accepted and approved tradition. It not only forms an integral part of the total structure but also contributes towards making the kāvya a fine work of art. In fact *Rasakallola* expresses fervent spiritual longing in the intimate language of earthly passion and illustrates with great poetic ability the use of love-motifs in the service of religion. The romantic sport of Rādhā and Kruṣna has been conceived and portrayed in *Rasakallola* anthropomorphically through analogies of human love. One may recall what B.C. Mazumdar said:

> Even Dīnakrushna Dās whose *Rasakallola* was written to display literary skill found a sect of Vaiṣṇavas to accept his book as their holy text.

Since Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism based on emotional devotionism (*rāgānuga bhakti*) had not been well received by the religious and literary community of Dīnakrushna's times, his great work *Rasakallola* consigned to ignominy and disgrace. But succeeding generations have hailed it as a great kāvya and hailed Dīnakrushna as one of the greatest poets of mediaeval Oriya literature.

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DINAKRUSHNA DAS (c. seventeenth century), was a medieval poet of Orissa and is fondly remembered for his **Rasokallola**. His songs are sung by the peasants all over Orissa and many of his lines have passed into proverbs. A judicious mixture of Sanskrit and Oriya makes his verse extremely elegant and picturesque.

SURENDRA MOHANTY (b. 1922) is an eminent Oriya writer and is the recipient of a number of literary awards, including the Sahitya Akademi Award. He has written this monograph mainly for the benefit of the non-Oriya reader, who is not much acquainted with Dinakrushna Das.

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